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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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Note by the Secretary-General

In its resolution 2008/31, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Assembly, in its resolution 63/201, also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its sixty-fourth session. The present report, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, is submitted in response to the resolutions of the Assembly and the Council.

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Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan*

Summary

The occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the use of arbitrary detention, the disproportionate use of force, house demolitions, severe mobility restrictions, lack of building permits and closure policies continue to intensify the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian residents of the occupied Palestinian territory. Internal Palestinian conflict has also continued to cause casualties and disrupted the delivery of essential services to the population.

Attacks by Palestinian militants and the launching of rockets into Israeli cities from the Gaza Strip continued in 2008, as did Israeli military operations. In December 2008, the Israeli army launched a 22-day military operation in the Gaza Strip that killed a reported 1,440 people and injured 5,380, and gravely deepened the existing humanitarian and economic crisis caused by the ongoing blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip, which has remained isolated since June 2007, with rapidly deteriorating conditions, a near collapse of the private sector and shortages of essentials such as food, electricity and fuel.

The Israeli closure system remains a primary cause of poverty and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, and restricts Palestinian access to natural resources, including land, basic social services, employment, markets and social and religious networks. However, despite those constraints, the Palestinian Authority managed to make some progress in areas such as security, public financial management, local public infrastructure and health and education services, not least because it was able to fully pay civil servants every month.

Israeli settlement and outpost expansion, land confiscation and the construction of a barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory, contrary to the road map and the Geneva Convention and other norms of international law, isolate occupied East Jerusalem, severely intrude into the West Bank and curtail economic and social life.

The ongoing occupation and expansion of settlements by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and the restrictions imposed on the Syrian citizens living there also continue to create economic and social hardship for the Syrian Arab residents.

* The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia would like to acknowledge its appreciation for the substantive contributions to the present report of the Department for Political Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Labour Organization and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2008/31, the Economic and Social Council stressed the importance of reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions, including 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1544 (2004), and the principle of land for peace, as well as compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people. The Economic and Social Council called for the lifting of the severe restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, including those arising from ongoing Israeli military operations, and for other urgent measures to be taken to alleviate the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the Gaza Strip. The Council stressed the need to preserve the national unity and territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the territory, including the removal of restrictions on going to and from East Jerusalem, and the freedom of movement to and from the outside world. In the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council called upon all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

2. The Council called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destruction of homes and properties, economic institutions and agricultural lands and orchards in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan. It reaffirmed that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, are illegal and an obstacle to economic and social development, and called for full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. It also stressed that the wall being constructed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is isolating East Jerusalem, fragmenting the West Bank and seriously debilitating the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and called in this regard for full compliance with legal obligations laid out in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice rendered on 9 July 2004 (see A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1) and in General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. It requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-third session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. In its resolution 63/201, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, damage, cause loss or depletion of, or endanger the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Assembly recognized the right of the Palestinian people to claim restitution as a result of any exploitation, damage, loss or depletion, or endangerment of their natural resources resulting from illegal measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Assembly stressed that the wall being constructed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem,

is contrary to international law and is seriously depriving the Palestinian people of access to their natural resources, and called in this regard for full compliance with the legal obligations stipulated in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and in resolution ES-10/15. The Assembly called on Israel, the occupying Power, to cease the dumping of all kinds of waste materials in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which gravely threaten their water and land resources, and pose an environmental hazard and health threat to the civilian populations. The Assembly further called upon Israel to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewerage networks, which, inter alia, has a negative impact on the natural resources of the Palestinian people. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem

Deaths and injuries

4. The Israeli army continued to launch military operations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Attacks by Palestinian militants and the launching of rockets into Israeli cities from the Gaza Strip continued in 2008. The number of casualties caused by the conflict has risen dramatically, mainly as a result of a series of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, culminating in "Operation Cast Lead", which began on 27 December 2008. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that casualties in the West Bank were related to settler-related violence, anti-barrier demonstrations, search and arrest operations, military patrols and Israeli army undercover operations. Between January 2008 and 19 January 2009, at least 1,766 Palestinians were killed as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as compared with 396 in 2007. The majority, 1,715 — of whom 469 were children — were killed in the Gaza Strip. The number of Palestinians injured during the same period was 7,164, as compared with 1,843 in 2007. The majority, 5,814 — of whom at least 1,886 were children — were injured in the Gaza Strip.

5. During the 22 days of the Israeli military operation "Cast Lead", the population of Gaza endured intensive and almost uninterrupted aerial bombardments, artillery shelling and ground operations, resulting in the deaths of 1,440 people and injury to 5,380, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza. Of those killed, 431 were children and 114 were women; 1,872 of those injured were children and 800 were women.

6. While not directly a result of occupation, Palestinian internal conflict has also caused casualties. From January to October 2008, 106 Palestinians were killed and 573 injured as a result of internal violence.[1]

7. While the purpose of the present report is to describe the effects of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people, it is important to note that between September 2000 and December 2008, a reported 580 Israelis — 490 civilians and 90 security force personnel — were killed by Palestinians.[2] In 2008, 12 Israelis were killed and

[1] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, protection of civilians database (figures to the end of 2008 are not yet available).

[2] B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english).

23 injured between 1 January and 26 December, the date of the initiation of Operation Cast Lead. During Operation Cast Lead, the lives of approximately 1 million Israeli citizens living within 40 km of the border of the Gaza Strip were threatened by Palestinian rocket and mortar fire. Three Israeli civilians were killed and 182 injured. Ten Israeli military personnel were killed.[3]

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

8. On 3 February 2009, 7,951 Palestinians were reported to be detained in Israeli prisons, of whom 374 were minors, 50 of them under the age of 16. Of those, 564 Palestinian prisoners, including 5 children, are "administrative detainees" (detention without charge or trial).[4] As at the end of November 2008, more than 60 Palestinian women and more than 300 Palestinian children were reportedly being held in custody in Israeli prisons. In the West Bank, the Israeli authorities carried out at least 4,878 search operations and 3,896 detentions between 1 February and 31 December 2008. In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army carried out 51 search operations and made 684 arrests.

Population displacement and property destruction and confiscation

9. Palestinians are displaced as a result of property destruction, land confiscation and the revocation of residency permits, as well as occasional deportation. During the first quarter of 2008, Israeli authorities demolished 124 structures in the West Bank because of a lack of permits. As 61 of the structures were residential, their demolition led to the displacement of 435 Palestinians, including at least 135 children. Most of the demolitions were carried out in January. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded the demolition of 204 Palestinian-owned structures, including 108 residential structures, between February and December 2008. Those demolitions led to the displacement of more than 400 Palestinians. A total of 95 per cent of those demolitions were carried out because of the lack of a building permit, which is required by the Israeli authorities. Permits are seldom issued and very difficult for Palestinians to obtain, forcing many to build without them. During the first half of 2008, Israeli authorities demolished 37 homes in the Gaza Strip for military purposes, rendering 141 Palestinians, including 67 children, homeless.[5]

10. Displacement in the West Bank is also a result of the construction of the barrier. A survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics found that by June 2008, 27,841 people had been displaced since the beginning of the construction of the barrier, as compared with the 2005 figure of 14,364.

11. In the first 10 months of 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded 290 settler-related incidents targeting Palestinians and their property. It should be noted that, while not comprehensive, that total

[3] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of Civilians Weekly Report", 16-20 January 2009, p.1; *The Humanitarian Monitor*, No. 33 (January 2009).

[4] Palestinian Authority contribution; B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/statistics/Minors_in_Custody.asp and http://www.btselem.org/english/statistics/Detainees_and_Prisoners.asp).

[5] Palestinian Authority contribution; B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/planning_and_building.

surpasses the number recorded by the Office in each of the previous two years (182 and 243 in 2006 and 2007, respectively).[6]

12. During the course of the Israeli operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip, tens of thousands of Palestinians were internally displaced. The human rights non-governmental organization Al Mezan estimated that, as at 15 January, at least 200,000 people had been displaced. Surveys conducted immediately after the ceasefire indicated that between 37 and 38 per cent of Gazans — over half a million people — had fled their homes at some point during the conflict for at least a short period of time. A survey led by the United Nations Development Programme of damaged and destroyed housing throughout Gaza conducted immediately following the ceasefire there, found that 3,354 houses had been completely destroyed and 11,112 houses were partially damaged. While the vast majority of the displaced stayed with relatives or friends, many were housed in schools and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). By 17 January, just prior to the commencement of the ceasefire, UNRWA was hosting close to 51,000 displaced persons in 50 emergency shelters.

13. During Operation Cast Lead, 52 UNRWA installations in Gaza were damaged by Israeli fire. On 15 January, the main UNRWA compound in Gaza City was directly hit by several Israeli shells. Hundreds of tons of food and medicine were destroyed. Approximately 700 Palestinians taking refuge in the building had to be evacuated. According to UNRWA, the shell that struck the building contained white phosphorus.[7] Preliminary estimates indicate that the cost of repairs to damaged Agency installations will exceed $3 million, not including the cost of replacement supplies and equipment. Losses in supplies are estimated at $3.6 million. It should be noted that other United Nations agencies, namely the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme (WFP), reported damage to their offices and warehouses as a result of Operation Cast Lead.

Barrier

14. The total length of the barrier, as approved by the Israeli Cabinet in April 2006, is 723 km, more than twice as long as the 320 km Armistice Line of 1949 (Green Line). The majority of the route, approximately 87 per cent, runs inside the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, rather than along the Green Line. General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 acknowledged the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice to the effect that the route of the barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory is contrary to international law.

15. The barrier intrudes significantly into the West Bank, looping around settlements and fragmenting the West Bank into non-contiguous enclaves of Palestinian territory, isolated from the rest of the West Bank. By September 2008, 57 per cent of the barrier had been constructed, passing through 171 Palestinian communities and displacing 27,841 people in 3,880 families. The Israeli authorities have confiscated 49,291 dunums[8] of land for the construction of the barrier, most of

[6] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA Special Focus: Unprotected — Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their property (December 2008).

[7] United Nations News Centre, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29558&Cr=gaza&Cr1=unrwa#.

[8] One dunum = 1,000 m^2.

which lie in the northern West Bank, which contains the most fertile lands. The barrier has also segregated 274,607 dunums from their owners.[9]

16. In the northern West Bank, the area between the barrier and the Green Line was declared a closed zone by military order in October 2003. Approximately 10,000 Palestinians residing in these areas have become physically separated from the rest of the West Bank. The majority require "permanent resident" permits from the Israeli military to continue to live in their own homes. Health and education services are generally located on the other side of the barrier, so children, patients and workers have to pass through gates in order to reach schools, medical facilities and workplaces and to maintain family and social relations. When complete, approximately 35,000 West Bank Palestinians will be located in between the barrier and the Green Line, as will the majority of the approximately 250,000 Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem. The percentage of Palestinian households displaced by the barrier has increased by 58 per cent since 2005, and the areas completely closed increased by 50 per cent.[10]

17. The barrier also isolates the land and water resources of an ever larger number of Palestinians, in particular farmers, who now require "visitor" permits to access their lands through designated gates. In the northern West Bank, permit requirements have become more stringent over the years. Fewer than 20 per cent of those who used to farm their lands in the closed area are now granted permits.[11] For the minority who are granted permits, access is through one of the approximately 70 designated barrier gates and checkpoints which open on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis. There are also restrictions on the passage of vehicles, agricultural equipment and materials. The restrictions resulting from the permit and gate regime severely curtail opportunities for cultivation, which has a negative impact on agricultural practice and rural livelihoods.

18. The barrier isolates densely populated Palestinian localities currently inside the Jerusalem municipal boundary from the city, while physically separating neighbouring West Bank villages that were once closely connected to occupied East Jerusalem. The completion of the barrier around the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc will physically separate occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and will further restrict access by Palestinians to workplaces, health, education and other services and places of worship.

19. Further south, the barrier already separates Bethlehem from occupied East Jerusalem. Construction of the barrier around the Gush Etzion settlement bloc will sever the territorial contiguity of Bethlehem and curtail its potential for natural growth. It will also separate the city from its agricultural hinterland, which comprises nine Palestinian communities of approximately 22,000 residents, who will face restricted access to services in Bethlehem, including markets, health services and higher education.

[9] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA Special Focus: The Barrier Gate and Permit Regime Four Years On — Humanitarian Impact in the Northern West Bank* (November 2007).

Mobility restrictions and closure policies, including access to humanitarian assistance

West Bank access in 2008

20. Palestinian restrictions on movement have remained severely constrained. In its latest survey, completed on 11 September 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented 630 closure obstacles blocking internal Palestinian movement, including 93 staffed checkpoints and 537 unstaffed obstacles (roadblocks, earth mounds, road barriers and so forth).[12] The weekly average number of "flying" (random) checkpoints in 2008 stood at 73. The survey also found that almost three quarters of the main routes leading into the 18 most populated Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank and almost half of the alternate routes were either blocked or controlled by an Israeli army checkpoint.

21. The closure obstacles constitute only one of several layers of a complex system of movement restrictions. The barrier also plays a major role in that system. Approximately 21 per cent of the West Bank has been declared "closed military zone" over the years, and an additional 3 per cent lies within the outer limits of 149 Israeli settlements and industrial zones, largely inaccessible to Palestinians.

22. Access by Palestinians to occupied East Jerusalem is prohibited by Israeli law, except for those Palestinians who hold an Israeli identity card or a special permit, which is rarely granted. In the Ramallah district, Israeli authorities have constructed a road system which effectively diverts Palestinian traffic away from primary roads in the occupied territory, which are now reserved for the exclusive use of Israelis. That exclusion is reinforced by hundreds of physical obstacles restricting access by Palestinians to primary roads.

23. The Israeli authorities have reduced from 12 to 4 the number of crossings through which the United Nations is authorized to import goods from Israel to the West Bank. Israeli security staff at checkpoints cause United Nations staff to experience delays, most of which are due to requests that go against the agreed privileges and immunities of the United Nations. A peak in the number of incidents occurred in April 2008 (181 incidents).

24. In the West Bank, a considerable number of the 918 incidents of delayed or denied access reported by UNRWA staff in 2008 affected the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance, including the transportation of food aid, medicine, mobile health teams and food distribution teams. The number of access incidents reported in 2008 (918) was nearly four times as high as in 2007 (231). Those affected included teachers, doctors and nurses, social workers and field office staff, this had a negative impact on the delivery of education and health services and relief operations. UNRWA reported that its West Bank field office lost an estimated 2,199 workdays in 2008 as a result of access restrictions.

Restrictions on access to and from the Gaza Strip

25. The blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip following the forceful Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007 continued throughout 2008. The Government of

[12] This figure does not include 8 checkpoints located on the Green Line, 69 obstacles located in the Israeli-controlled section of Hebron City (H-2) and 56 gates along the West Bank barrier.

Israel has expressed concern that arms were being smuggled through the borders of the Gaza Strip and that rocket and mortar fire continued from the Gaza Strip into Israel during the reporting period. The main components of the blockade are the closure of Karni, the largest commercial crossing; the suspension of all exports and most industrial/non-humanitarian imports; a severe reduction in the amount of fuel allowed to enter; an almost total ban on the movement of Palestinians through Erez, the sole passenger crossing with Israel and the West Bank; and a partial closure of the Rafah crossing point, the only passenger crossing point with Egypt. This blockade has created a deep humanitarian crisis leading to the widespread erosion of livelihoods and a significant deterioration in infrastructure and essential services.

26. The daily average of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip during 2008 through official crossings stood at approximately 100, about one fifth of the number allowed in May 2007, immediately before the beginning of the blockade (475 truckloads a day). Throughout the year, Israel also continued to place restrictions on the type of commodities allowed to enter, damaging the Gaza Strip's already depressed private sector and compromising the provision of basic services.

27. The Erez crossing — the only passage for movement of people between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank via Israel — remained inaccessible for the large majority of the Palestinian population, with the exception of a small number of businessmen and emergency medical cases holding special permits. United Nations staff continued to face difficulties crossing at the Erez checkpoint from Gaza into Israel.

28. The Rafah crossing, which connects the Gaza Strip with Egypt, has remained officially closed since June 2007. However, the crossing has been opened by the Egyptian authorities for a few days every month to allow the movement of limited numbers of medical patients, pilgrims, students and political delegations.

29. As a result of the Israeli military operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip, on 8 January 2009 the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and for unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance, and condemning all violence directed against civilians. The Council also called for efforts to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and to ensure sustained reopening of crossing points on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

30. Since the cessation of Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli authorities have allowed only selected international aid workers into the Gaza Strip. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, of the 178 requests to enter the Gaza Strip submitted by international non-governmental organizations during January 2009, only 18 requests for medical staff were approved.

The humanitarian and socio-economic impact of the Israeli military operation Cast Lead

31. By April 2009, the closure had not been lifted, and the flow of goods and cash into the Gaza Strip continue to be severely restricted. An alternative tunnel economy, largely regulated by Hamas, has developed in Rafah along the Egypt-Gaza border, with estimates of the number of active tunnels ranging from 200 to 600. These were targeted by Israeli air strikes starting in December 2008 because of suspicions that arms were being smuggled through the tunnels. Following the

ceasefire, operations are reported to have resumed in many of the tunnels, supplying the market with a range of goods, including fuel.

32. During Operation Cast Lead, the limited supply of fuel allowed into the Gaza Strip from Israel, combined with damage incurred to main power lines and transformers, the limited access for technical teams to damaged areas and the closure of the power plant, rendered more than 60 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip without electricity during the three-week period of military operations.

33. The power outages, coupled with the severe shortage of fuel and spare parts for backup generators, have disabled parts of the water and sanitation system. On 27 December, about 80 per cent of the Gaza Strip's water wells were partially functioning and the rest were non-functional. The lack of fuel and spare parts forced the Gaza water utility to discharge millions of litres of raw sewage into the sea every day, resulting in significant environmental damage, including to marine life.

34. At the height of Operation Cast Lead, approximately 500,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip did not have access to running water, as the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility was unable to repair damage to water and wastewater networks. A further 500,000 people received water for only a few hours a week, and the remaining population received water for between 4 and 6 hours every 2 or 3 days.

35. Damage to sewerage networks and pumping stations affected thousands of people, with raw sewage flooding some streets. On 10 January 2009, the Gaza City wastewater treatment plant was hit during military operations. As a result, one pond treatment embankment was severely damaged, causing the leakage of 200,000 m^3 of wastewater into the nearby agricultural fields. Moreover, one of the plant's sewage pipelines was also hit and damaged on the same day. The damage resulted in the leakage of an estimated 20,000 m^3 per day until 23 January.

36. Preliminary findings of the Palestinian Hydrology Group initial rapid needs assessment of households showed that some 5,700 rooftop tanks were completely destroyed and 2,900 damaged. in a couple of areas, 50 per cent of the water networks were destroyed, while other areas sustained damage to 30 to 35 per cent of their water networks.

37. The Gaza Strip health-care system faced serious challenges during Operation Cast Lead. Medical facilities were repeatedly struck during bombardments, and medical staff were themselves victims of some attacks. In the course of the three-week military operation, 16 medical personnel were killed and 26 were injured while on duty. The Israeli bombardment damaged or destroyed 29 ambulances and hit medical facilities. Of the 122 health facilities in the Gaza Strip, 48 per cent were either damaged or destroyed by direct or indirect shelling. On 20 March 2009, all Gaza Strip patient referrals for treatment outside of the Gaza Strip were halted owing to the refusal of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to approve applications issued by the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health Referral Department in the Gaza Strip.[13]

38. The three weeks of continuous bombardment by air, land and sea has also had a serious detrimental psychosocial impact on residents of the Gaza Strip, particularly on children.

[13] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/World Health Organization, joint statement of concern over the halting of Gaza medical patient referrals (30 March 2009).

39. Of particular concern is the impact of the conflict on chronically ill patients. It is estimated that the treatment of 40 per cent of such patients was interrupted as a result of the fact that life-threatening injuries were accorded higher priority in the overwhelmed system. The referral of chronically ill patients to Israeli and West Bank hospitals came to an almost complete halt during the course of the military operations.

40. The United Nations issued a flash appeal on 5 February 2009 amounting to $613 million. The appeal incorporates 106 non-governmental organizations and 82 United Nations projects to respond to the emergency humanitarian and early recovery needs of 1.4 million people in Gaza over a period of nine months in the areas of education, agriculture, health and food security, among others. Despite the assurances by the Government of Israel that humanitarian goods would be allowed into the Gaza Strip, by April 2009 the United Nations was still unable to implement large parts of the flash appeal owing to the refusal to permit the entry of necessary goods and personnel.

Israeli settlements

41. From 1967 to the end of 2007, Israel established 120 settlements in the West Bank, excluding occupied East Jerusalem, which were recognized by the Ministry of the Interior of Israel as Israeli "communities" within the occupied territory. Twelve other settlements are located on land annexed by Israel in 1967 and made part of the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem. In addition, there are approximately 100 "outposts", which are settlements unauthorized and unrecognized by the Israeli authorities. As a result, almost 40 per cent of the West Bank is currently taken up by Israeli infrastructure associated with the settlements, including roads, barriers, buffer zones and military bases.

42. At the end of 2008, an estimated 193,700 Israeli settlers were living in occupied East Jerusalem,[14] while approximately 289,600 Israeli settlers were living in the West Bank.[15] A study by Ariel University Centre of Samaria revealed that over a period of 12 years, the settler population in the West Bank grew by 107 per cent, from 130,000 in 1995 to 270,000 at the end of 2007. In 2008, the number of tenders issued in occupied East Jerusalem increased by a factor of nearly 40 as compared with 2007.[16]

43. During 2008, 1,518 new Israeli structures were constructed in the West Bank, 61 per cent of them west of the barrier and 39 per cent east of it. Those structures include 748 permanent buildings in Israeli settlements, as compared with 800 in 2007, marking a 60 per cent increase.[17]

44. In March 2009, Peace Now, an Israeli non-governmental organizations, revealed that the Government of Israel had already approved the construction of at least 15,000 housing units in the occupied Palestinian territory, while approval was pending for plans for an additional 58,000 housing units. Of those housing units, 5,722 are planned for occupied East Jerusalem. If those plans materialize, the

[14] B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/Settlements/Statistics.asp).
[15] Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (see http://www.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2009/table1.pdf).
[16] European Union heads of mission report on East Jerusalem.
[17] Peace Now, "Summary of Construction in the West Bank 2008", available at http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3508&pos=1.

number of settlers in the occupied territory will be doubled (an addition of approximately 300,000 settlers, based on an average of 4 people in each housing unit).[18]

Natural resources, water and environment

45. The water supply and sanitation services for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory continue to be insufficient and unreliable in terms of quality and quantity. The Israeli authorities and water utility companies withdraw water from sources within the occupied Palestinian territory to supply Israeli cities, and then sell the surplus back to Palestinians. Preliminary data from the Palestinian Water Authority indicates that water purchased by Palestinians in the West Bank for domestic use from the Israeli water company Mekorot amounted to 47.8 million m^3 in 2008.[19] Israel prevents Palestinians from drawing water from the Jordan River, while itself using 86 per cent of renewable underground water sources in Palestinian areas. In addition, 35 Palestinian wells have become isolated by the barrier and thus unavailable to Palestinians.

46. According to the Israeli non-governmental organizations Yesh Din, 11 Israeli corporations are illegally operating quarries in the West Bank. Yesh Din alleges that 75 per cent of the output from the quarries is for the use of the Israeli construction industry, in violation of the obligations of Israel under international law to protect and preserve the national resources of the West Bank.[20]

Socio-economic indicators

47. The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continues to cause socio-economic hardship for the Palestinian population. Poverty levels in the Gaza Strip for 2007 are estimated at 80 per cent of households, as compared with 45 per cent in the West Bank.[21] While data on 2008 poverty levels are not yet available, the humanitarian crisis, severe restrictions on the entry of goods and humanitarian aid and cash shortages in the Gaza Strip suggest that poverty levels for 2008 will increase even further. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, unemployment (relaxed definition, which includes those not actively seeking work) rose from 32.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2008 to 33.4 per cent in the fourth quarter, with 48.8 per cent unemployed in the Gaza Strip, as compared with 26 per cent in the West Bank.[22] Inflation has risen dramatically, from about 1 per cent in 2007 to about 7 per cent in December 2008, which has further strained the coping strategies of the poor.[21]

48. The reduction in the number of imports and the ban on exports have had a destructive impact on the livelihoods of the population of the Gaza Strip. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, about 95 per cent of

[18] Peace Now, "Ministry of Housing's Plans for the West Bank — March 2009", available at http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3566.

[19] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the occasion of World Water Day, 22 March 2009.

[20] See www.yesh-din.org/site/index.php?lang=en.

[21] International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza: third review of progress* (February 2009), p. 2.

[22] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, labour force survey for the fourth quarter of 2008 (February 2009).

industrial operations had already been suspended by the end of 2007. On the eve of the military operation of December 2008, an estimated 23 out of 3,900 industries were operating and an estimated 34,000 workers in the industrial sector had lost their jobs. The blockade paralysed large parts of the agricultural sector. Repeated Israeli incursions into the Gaza Strip have damaged land, crops and equipment and rendered large agricultural areas located in the so-called buffer zone off-limits to Palestinians. The lack of cash flow into the Gaza Strip has rendered Palestinian Authority employees, pensioners and social hardship cases unable to collect their salaries, pensions and welfare payments in cash.

49. Initial estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics put direct economic losses resulting from infrastructure and property destruction from Operation Cast Lead at approximately $1.4 billion by 13 January 2008 for the first 17 days of the operation. Income losses are estimated at $24 million per day. For the 17-day period, the cumulative loss is estimated to be approximately $408 million. This represents 80 per cent of the annual gross domestic product (GDP) of the Gaza Strip in recent years.

Palestinian fiscal situation

50. Despite continued restrictions on mobility and access to natural and financial resources, the Palestinian Authority has continued with institution-building and fiscal policy reforms. Government employment policy has been curtailed, wage rates have been reduced by 11 per cent in real terms and measures have been implemented to improve utility bill payments. The public finance management system has been strengthened by prioritizing and improving the quality of spending. Non-wage expenditure was about 1 per cent higher than budgeted. The draft 2009 budget includes further reforms and deficit-reduction measures, with the continued diversion of spending away from wages and subsidies and towards public investment. A supplementary budget is currently being prepared to include the cost of reconstruction and rehabilitation in the wake of the destruction in the Gaza Strip resulting from Operation Cast Lead.[23] Palestinian Authority total revenue fluctuated sharply, dropping from $1.1 billion in 1999 to $300 million in 2002, rising to $1.2 billion in 2005, and falling back down to $360 million in 2006 before increasing to $1.2 billion in 2007. Consequently, despite austerity measures, the Palestinian fiscal deficit jumped from 17 per cent of GDP in 2005 to 27 per cent in 2007. In 2008, the Palestinian Authority continued its implementation of fiscal policy reforms, with the result that the recurrent fiscal deficit is estimated to have declined to 19 per cent of GDP, reflecting a wage bill reduction of 11 per cent in real terms and reduced utility subsidies.[21]

Public health and food insecurity

51. Despite large inflows of aid, a joint rapid food survey conducted by WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNRWA in April 2008 estimated that 38 per cent of the Palestinian population of the occupied territory is food insecure. Food insecurity is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank:

[23] International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza: third review of progress* (February 2009), pp. 4-6; World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza Financial Sector Review* (December 2008).

56 per cent, as compared with 25 per cent.[24] High unemployment and underemployment in the Gaza Strip, compounded by the global inflation in food prices, has had a significant impact on the food security and nutrition level of the population. The survey also reveals that there has been a gradual shift in the diet of Gazans from high-cost, protein-rich fruits, vegetables and animal products to low-cost, high-energy cereals, sugar and oil. That change is likely to be reflected in increased rates of micronutrient deficiency, with children and women of childbearing age being the worst affected.

52. Because of frequent power cuts, most hospitals and health facilities in the Gaza Strip have had to rely extensively on backup generators to ensure the provision of medical services. Medical equipment has been damaged as a result of power cuts and water impurities. The situation is further compounded by the lack of maintenance and spare parts due to the blockade.

53. Health indicators in the Gaza Strip continued to compare unfavourably with those in the West Bank, with consistently higher infant and maternal mortality rates (infant mortality rates: 25.2 per 1,000 in the Gaza Strip and 15.3 per 1,000 in West Bank; maternal mortality rates: 37.5 per 100,000 births in the Gaza Strip and 8.2 per 100,000 births in West Bank, according to UNRWA data), a lower life expectancy and higher levels of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency.

Youth and education

54. The Israeli occupation continues to have a negative impact on access to education by young people in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Restrictions on movement and the construction of the barrier in the West Bank and military operations in the Gaza Strip impede access to schools and other educational activities by students and teachers. As a consequence, the quality of education is reportedly declining. The Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education reported a decline in enrolment rates and test scores in mathematics, Arabic and English, according to the results of national tests conducted for the school year 2007/08.[25]

55. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), violence against children in the occupied Palestinian territory rose between late 2006 and early 2008, reflecting growing tensions in schools and households caused by worsening socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNICEF has also reported that children are manifesting high levels of psychological distress such as withdrawal, sleeplessness, nightmares, aggressiveness and poor concentration.[26]

56. With 56 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip under the age of 18, children and young people bore a disproportionate share of the impact of Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip. Current reports show that 7 schools in the northern part of the Gaza Strip were badly damaged and over 150 primary schools were partially damaged. The movement of teachers, young people and, in particular, children, to and from schools remains dangerous, owing to unexploded ordnance. In the days immediately following the ceasefire, two Palestinian children were killed by

[24] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Occupied Palestinian territory: 2009 Consolidated Appeal*, p. 34.

[25] Ibid., pp. 27 and 42.

[26] Ibid., pp. 27 and 28.

unexploded ordnance in Al-Zaitoun. Schools, 60 per cent of which were already running double shifts prior to the recent conflict, may now have to run triple shifts. They are not designed to accommodate such an additional student load.

Status of women

57. The participation rate for women in the labour force was only 15.2 per cent in 2008, as compared with 66.8 per cent for men. The unemployment rate for women in 2008 was 23.8 per cent. The poverty rate among households headed by females was 61.2 per cent, compared with 56.9 per cent for households headed by males in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2007. The poverty rate among female-headed households with seven or more children is 79.7 per cent, compared with 68.6 per cent for households with five or six children.

58. According to UNICEF and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, an estimated 2,500 pregnant women per year face difficulties in obtaining access to a delivery facility owing to the Israeli closure system. In addition, the United Nations Population Fund highlighted the risks for more than 40,000 pregnant women in the Gaza Strip who were denied proper medical treatment during the military operation of December 2008 and January 2009.

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

59. The Syrian Golan, which measures approximately 1,250 km^2, has been under Israeli occupation since 1967. The decision of the Israeli Government to impose its law, jurisdiction and administration over the occupied Syrian Golan was deemed null and void by the Security Council in its resolution 497 (1981).

60. Israel prevents the return of those members of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan expelled in 1967. By 2008, the remaining 18,000 Syrian citizens were living in five main towns in the occupied Syrian Golan.[27] At the same time, an estimated 18,000 Israeli settlers live in 32 settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan.[28]

61. Construction of infrastructure and housing by Israel was actively pursued in 2007 and early 2008.[29] The Israeli Land Department put up 2,500 dunums of land in the occupied Golan for sale to settlers. According to a recent decision by the Regional Settlements Council in the occupied Syrian Golan, a new settlement tourism village will be built by 2010, on 40 dunums of land close to the destroyed village of Amudiyah, with an earmarked amount of $30 million.[30]

62. The Israeli occupation continues to have a negative impact on the livelihoods of the Syrian population in the occupied Golan as a result of measures imposed by the Israeli authorities, particularly the restrictions on land cultivation and farming, alleged land confiscation, the uprooting and destruction of trees and seedlings and discrimination with regard to access to water and construction. Land left

[27] Al Marsad, *Changing the Landscape: Israel's Gross Violations of International Law in the Occupied Syrian Golan* (November 2008), p. 21.

[28] A/63/519, para. 42.

[29] Ibid.

[30] A/63/273, para. 102.

uncultivated is subject to confiscation by the Israeli authorities.[31] It should be noted that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), with the support of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), assisted in transporting almost 8,000 tons of apples in 2009 from the occupied Golan to markets in the Syrian Arab Republic. There were no apple transfers in 2008 because of poor harvests.[32]

63. As a result of discrimination with regard to access to water and subsidies granted to Israeli producers, combined with a high dependency on the Israeli market, cultivation is more difficult for the Syrian citizens of the Golan.[33] The Israeli water authority imposes discriminatory water quotas on Syrian farmers: the quota for Israeli settlers is 450 m^3 of water per dunum of land, and the quota for Arab farmers is 90 m^3 per dunum. In addition, Syrian citizens pay more for water as a result of an indirectly discriminatory tariff system. Syrian citizens are therefore unable to produce the same quantity of high-quality produce per dunum of land as Israeli settlers in the region.[34]

64. Employment prospects for the Syrian population in the occupied Syrian Golan remain bleak. Students benefiting from university education find few employment prospects in the occupied Syrian Golan. Employment opportunities in the Israeli administration are limited and Syrian citizens reportedly face discrimination in access to such jobs because of their political opinions and refusal to take up Israeli citizenship.[35]

65. Syrian community leaders have launched an appeal to end restrictions on travel from the occupied Syrian Golan to other parts of the Syrian Arab Republic and to maintain their Syrian Arab identity.[36] During the first six months of 2008, 19 students and 7 civilians crossed between the occupied Golan Heights and the Syrian Arab Republic with the assistance of UNDOF and ICRC.[37] However, it has been reported that on 18 April 2008, Israeli authorities confiscated the Syrian identity cards of 19 students from the occupied Golan who were returning home after having completed their studies at Syrian universities. The Syrian authorities reported that students from the occupied Golan Heights are prevented from completing their university education or gaining entry to particular faculties in Israeli institutions unless they accept Israeli nationality.[38]

66. The five occupied Syrian villages in the Golan suffer from a shortage of health centres and clinics. The villages have no access to a nearby hospital and citizens must go elsewhere for simple surgical procedures. Increased costs are incurred and there is resultant hardship because of the lack of doctors, specialist clinics,

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[31] *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2008); appendix to the report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 97th session, 2008, para. 83.

[32] International Committee of the Red Cross, press release, 17 February 2009, available at http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/israel-syria-news-170209!OpenDocument.

[33] *The Situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2008); appendix to the report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 97th session, 2008, para. 88.

[34] Ibid., para. 84.

[35] Ibid., para. 86.

[36] Ibid., para. 88.

[37] S/2008/390, para. 3.

[38] A/63/273, para. 108.

including gynaecological and obstetrics departments, X-ray services and emergency rooms.[39]

67. There are an estimated 2 million mines and 76 minefields in the occupied Syrian Golan.[40] The long-term presence of the mines and the deterioration of their detonation systems continue to pose a threat to local inhabitants.[41] The total number of victims of Israeli mines in the occupied Syrian Golan is reported to be 531. Of those, 202 were fatalities. Children in particular are vulnerable to this threat. A total of 329 people have sustained permanent disabilities since the beginning of the occupation.[40]

68. The Syrian authorities have reported that as at 1 July 2008, 16 citizens from the occupied Syrian Golan were being detained in Israeli prisons.[42]

IV. Conclusions

69. A combination of closures and sanctions imposed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory and the recent military operation in the Gaza Strip led to a deepening of the humanitarian and socio-economic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2008.

70. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have declared that the Israeli decision to annex the Golan is null and void.[43] Nevertheless, in 2007, Israel continued its expansion of settlements and its curtailment of the rights of the Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan.

71. In his message of 10 March 2009 to the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, the Secretary-General called for a proper and durable ceasefire as soon as possible to allow for a return of calm in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. He added that the situation at the crossings was intolerable, and that it was crucial that Israel take meaningful steps to ease the closure, without which Palestinian economic recovery cannot take place. He underscored that a ceasefire should pave the way for the reopening of all Gaza crossings based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, stating that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) embodied those basic parameters. He pointed out that, in the West Bank, the efforts of Prime Minister Fayyad to improve security arrangements — an obligation under the road map — have borne fruit. However, he noted that Israeli raids had continued; checkpoints and curfews were still present; and settlement activity had accelerated. The latter contravened the road map obligations of Israel, as reaffirmed by both parties before the Quartet at Sharm el-Sheikh in November 2008. In closing, the Secretary-General observed that only a permanent negotiated political settlement, which would end the occupation, could provide a sustainable solution to the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and lasting security for Israel. The United Nations would continue to do its part towards realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

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[39] Ibid., para. 110.
[40] Ibid., para. 107.
[41] S/2008/390, para. 4.
[42] A/63/273, para. 106.
[43] Security Council resolution 497 (1981), General Assembly resolution 61/27.